

New study illustrates the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on New York City workers and union members

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The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on labor markets worldwide. In the U.S., millions of workers have been

furloughed or laid off in both unionized and non-union sectors. New York is no exception. In the early phases of the pandemic, New York City was the national epicenter due to its high population density, extensive reliance on public transportation, high rates of poverty and poor access to health care. The initial delays in responding by government officials, as well as the limited availability of testing, compounded these problems. An estimated 6,000 working age (18-64) New Yorkers have died from COVID-19, among nearly 24,000 in the city's population. Although unionized workers were less likely to lose their lives to the virus than the general workforce, for some unions and sectors the impact has been devastating. A report released today by the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies, "State of the Unions 2020, A Profile of Organized Labor in New York City, New York State, and the United States," presents data on confirmed COVID cases and deaths, as well as layoffs and furloughs, among members of some of New York City's largest unions as of July 2020, and analyzes the pandemic's effect more broadly on New York's labor market. The report also includes an in-depth look at the geographic, demographic, and occupational makeup of union membership in New York City, New York State, and the nation.

"There's still much to learn about the impact this pandemic will ultimately have on New York's labor market; not just initially, but for years to come," said report co-author Ruth Milkman, Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies and the CUNY Graduate Center. "We haven't seen this scale of unemployment—over 20% in June according to the official statistics—since the 1930s. And the actual rate is likely much higher."

The report notes that there were 758,400 fewer private-sector jobs in New York City in June 2020 than in June 2019. Public-sector workers were much less likely to be laid off or furloughed. Workers in the tourism industry were especially vulnerable, as were workers in the

hotel, retail and entertainment industries. More than half the private-sector job losses between June 2019-June 2020 were in only two industry groups: "leisure and hospitality" (-278,900) and "trade, transportation, and utilities" (-136,700). In addition, the State Comptroller's Office reported that between March 1 and July 10, 2020 alone, at least 2,800 small businesses closed permanently, including 1,289 restaurants and 844 retail businesses. According to that report's authors, those jobs are unlikely to be restored in the foreseeable future.

More information: State of the Unions 2020, A Profile of Organized Labor in New York City, New York State, and the United States:
[slu.cuny.edu/wp-content/upload ... y-Report-2020pdf.pdf](https://slu.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/State-of-the-Unions-2020.pdf)

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